



State of the City

Mayor Lioneld Jordan

January 19, 2010



Ladies and gentlemen of the City Council and my fellow citizens of Fayetteville, as I report to you on the State of the City, I am reminded of that famous Charles Dickens line from *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

Yet, it is also a time that demands a fully informed public, a realistic understanding of what can and must be done, honesty about the serious challenges we face in City government, an unwavering commitment to continue our progress as a community, a bold imagination about our future, a determination to effectively manage limited resources, and a firm faith that, working together, we can do what the times require. And we will.



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This can be seen as “the best of times,” because the people of our city have a commitment to community. Nowhere was that more evident than when we came together to agree upon our goals, chart our future, and move “Fayetteville Forward” by developing and implementing a strategic community and economic development plan that is already paying dividends for our city.



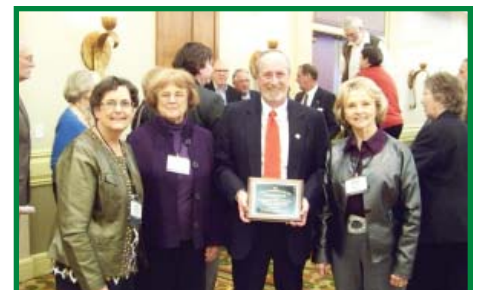
This can be seen as “the best of times,” because we were able to accomplish our goal of securing the establishment of a Satellite Campus of the UAMS medical school in Fayetteville. This success was the result of close cooperation of public and private groups and individuals working together to improve educational opportunities for the health professions, improve the quality of life for our citizens, and contribute to the economic health of our community.

This can be seen as “the best of times,” because we have a similar collaborative process for meeting our primary goal for 2010 – to secure funding for establishing a Green Jobs Training Center of Excellence in Fayetteville. We have an active working group comprised of the City administration, the City Council, the University of Arkansas, Northwest Arkansas Community College, the Northwest Arkansas Labor Council, and the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce. We have been working with Governor Beebe, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and the U.S. Department of Labor to secure funding for a training program to put people back to work in green jobs that pay a living wage. That is my top priority for 2010.

This can be seen as “the best of times,” because we have made significant strides to improving open government, expanding public information, empowering citizen input, and providing for transparency and accountability. We made major improvements to the City website (accessfayetteville.com) that include enhanced division pages, informational videos, answers to frequently asked questions, and a directory of all city departments and individuals. We have conducted four Town Hall meetings to bring government to the people and listen to their concerns, and we have added social media to reach a wider audience through Facebook and Twitter. The Government Channel’s informational programming is vastly improved.

This can be seen as “the best of times,” because we have continued to expand our infrastructure – streets, sidewalks, trails, water, sewer – and we completed the new LEED District Court building on time and on budget. We have made major investments in our technology infrastructure to make government more efficient and to save taxpayers money. The Planning Division implemented a digital submission process for private development review, and the Police Department added online crime reporting and warrant information. We will continue to expand such services to make your government more accessible and responsive.

This can be seen as “the best of times,” because our people make Fayetteville a unique community and a special place—the outstanding response of volunteers who donated thousands of hours to improving our parks and caring for the animals at our shelter, the generosity of spirit reflected in our food drive and help for the less fortunate, and other consistent acts of kindness that go unacknowledged but not unappreciated. The people of Fayetteville are the ones who have made our great city a 2009 Volunteer City of the Year in the State of Arkansas.



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This spirit of giving and sharing is reflected in the thousands of dollars donated for projects that range from movies in the park to rock walkways, to construction of a new dog park, as well as the fundraising events that provide financial support for nonprofit organizations in our community. It is also evident in our new partnership with the University of Arkansas to involve student organizations in community service projects and to utilize interns in various city departments.



This can be seen as “the best of times,” because we have been able to continue and expand our demonstrated commitment to sustainability and environmental concerns. From conversion of city lighting to LED to the light bulb exchange that provided CFL bulbs in community housing, we have been conserving energy, cutting carbon emissions, and saving money. We are dedicated to improving watershed protection and water quality, and we are working regionally to reduce pollution and meet national standards. From stream bank restoration projects and public information campaigns to the ongoing work on ordinances for low impact development, streamside protection, hillside development, a storm water utility, we are serious about protecting our environment. In addition, we have expanded our trail system, established a community garden project, begun planting native grasses in some of our parks, and planted trees and offered free trees to residents.

This can also be seen as “the best of times,” because we have faced and dealt with the financial effects of the national economic recession, “the worst of times” since the Great Depression. Last January, I said, “We are not immune from the problems of a faltering national economy, and we must anticipate and be prepared for the consequences of any revenue shortfall. We must be responsible stewards of our tax dollars, and we must maintain essential city services for our citizens.”

With the active participation of our City Council and the support of our dedicated city staff and employees, we developed and implemented a plan to address the revenue shortfall and its financial impact. We worked diligently to promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency in the City by using sound management principles and by maintaining a high level of public trust and confidence in the City’s staff and public officials to deliver desired and needed services.

We will get through this together. We will continue to pursue those practices and search for additional measures that reduce expenses yet maintain essential public services. In that spirit, Alderman Ferrell and the Council have proposed a correction in the distribution of city funds to assure park maintenance without a tax increase; I fully support this measure and urge you to do so at the May 18 election.

Finally, this can also be seen as “the best of times,” because we have a shared vision for our future, and we will not let the dreams of our people and our community perish. I have said many times, “Buy American. Buy local. Keep Fayetteville working.” The city hosted a reverse vendor workshop to increase the number of local businesses bidding on city projects, materials, and services. Please do your part by shopping with local merchants, businesses, and providers of professional services.



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We have made great strides in promoting the creative economy of the visual and performing arts, and we are participating in a series of public hearings to involve citizens in a long-term solution for parking problems for the Walton Arts Center and the Dickson Street entertainment district . We will pursue our dreams in both the best of times and the worst of times.

I cannot close without offering a personal note of thanks. We are blessed to have such dedicated city employees who work hard for you every day, and it is a privilege for me to work with them. I am grateful, too, for the hundreds of citizens who have contacted me this year to offer support or suggestions on how I can be doing a better job serving the people. I love this city, and I love this job. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity to serve you and all the residents of our community. That makes it the best of times for me.

